



People and Partners Fact Sheet

McNary and Umatilla

National Wildlife Refuges

Overview

Our vision is ambitious: bring new and innovative ways to conserve and protect fish and wildlife resources along the nearly 90 mile stretch of the eastern bend of the Columbia River from Richland, Washington to Boardman, Oregon.

Our success will depend on the power, cooperation and consent of an informed and involved public.

Strategic partnerships are needed. The two Refuges' 42,782 acres account for only a small portion of the larger Columbia River ecosystem. Only by encouraging people, businesses, interest groups and governments who reside in the area to actively participate in the decision making process and overall stewardship of the Refuges and surrounding resources can a place for fish and wildlife be assured. Public enjoyment, understanding and involvement in the Refuges will also help visitors and local communities recognize the Refuges as national assets and partners in progress.

Refuge Neighbors

The Tri-Cities of Pasco, Kennewick, and Richland, Washington provide a population base of more than 140,000 in close proximity to the McNary Refuge to the east as well as Patterson Unit of Umatilla Refuge to the south. The Tri-Cities provide many opportunities for partnerships with citizen groups, governments, and local businesses.

The town of Burbank borders large portions of McNary Refuge along the Snake and Columbia Rivers. The Burbank Sloughs stretch 3 miles along Hansen Loop Road between Burbank and the Columbia River



Centennial celebration with Friends group, mayor, Congressional aide and postal employees. Photo by Jim Mock of Friends group

and are popular for recreation with citizens of Burbank. The town of Wallula looks directly out over the Columbia River and is close to the Wallula Unit of McNary Refuge. Orchards form the northern border of the Wallula Unit.

Farmers adjacent to both Refuges grow a number of crops including orchards (apple, cherry), alfalfa and grain. Waterfowl, especially geese, use farmers' fields for feed during the long fall-through-spring period, sometimes impacting farm production. Refuge agricultural fields are managed under cooperative farm agreements with local farm businesses.

Boise Cascade and Tyson Meats are industries long settled between the Two Rivers and Wallula Units of the Refuge. The Ports of Walla Walla, Umatilla and Boardman conduct business on or close to Refuge areas. Opportunities for partnerships regarding these shared resources and public trust responsibilities exist.

The City of Hermiston and smaller town of Umatilla are the largest population centers in Oregon close to Umatilla Refuge. Their citizens use the water and wildlife resources of Umatilla Refuge for recreation. The town of Irrigon shares an eastern border with the Umatilla Refuge; mule deer are a common sight close to town. The Umatilla auto tour route is a favorite outdoor pastime for Irrigon residents.

Boardman is on the western edge of the Umatilla Refuge. Wildfire is a concern as it has impacted the town several times in recent years.

Refuge Friends, Volunteers and Partners

The *Friends of Mid-Columbia River Refuges* was organized in 2001 to provide high quality natural resources oriented programs free to the public. Over eighty local citizens belong to this nonprofit group. This group is in addition to the over one hundred other volunteers that contribute their time and assist on various projects at the Mid-Columbia River Refuges.

The McNary Wildlife Refuge Environmental Education Center is staffed by volunteers, Friends Group members, and Refuge staff. The popular education programs and facilities are used by over 3,500 students and adults annually from Burbank and surrounding schools. The Center provides educational and interpretive programs. The Center also has many bird mounts on display which are on loan from the Blue Mountain Audubon Society.

The Richland Rod & Gun Club has participated in many projects over the years including the wetland and riparian restoration work at the Wallula Unit. Members have contributed to the Refuge in the cleaning and operation of hunt blinds, purchase and placement of two accessible hunting blinds, and donation and annual maintenance of wood duck boxes.

Local Audubon clubs and bird experts have assisted with bird lists and other specialty projects and often tour both Refuges.

Local Indian tribes are interested in Refuges and an important source of knowledge and understanding of the resources of the area. The Wanapum People have participated in erection of a demonstration tule mat lodge at the Education Center. Biologists and

archaeologists from the Yakama Nation and the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation are often consulted on resource issues and have assisted Refuge staff in various wildlife and habitat projects.

Local fire and law enforcement departments have assisted Refuge firefighters and law enforcement officers on many occasions; and cooperative agreements for mutual assistance are in place with most departments.

The Refuge has completed several collaborative projects to improve wildlife habitat with partners including Ducks Unlimited, Army Corps of Engineers, Bureau of Reclamation, and the Washington Departments of Ecology and the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife.

West Nile virus and the management of mosquitoes are of increased concern to all citizens. The Refuges coordinates management activities with the Columbia Mosquito Control District to reduce the potential for serious disease outbreak.

The McNary Refuge receives water from the South Columbia Basin Irrigation District and has cooperated on several projects to increase habitats for wildlife.

The McNary Refuge has participated in the planning of the Highway 12 expansion project with the Washington Department of Transportation.

For more information

This fact sheet was authored by Dave Linehan, Deputy Project Leader for the Refuge Complex.

Do you have questions? Please feel free to contact Dave at Refuge headquarters at (509) 545-8588.